

## **STATEWIDE VIRTUAL REFERENCE PROJECT**

### ***Steering Committee Meeting Notes***

DATE: August 19, 2004  
LOCATION: Regional Justice Center, Kent

ATTENDEES: Linda Fenster, Buff Hirko, Jean Holcomb, Nancy Huling, Lisa Oberg, Barbara Pitney.

NOTES: The current and future project budgets were discussed. The 2003 budget (expires 9/30/04) will have a variance of just over \$30,000—largely due to the unfortunate lack of “library ambassador” presentations. However, \$30,000 of the funds will be applied to the renewal of Wally for the next federal fiscal year, meaning that the variance will go to good use. Buff provided an overview of the 2004 and 2005 budgets. Without any additional grant cycles, funding will be dramatically smaller in those years and will be focused on training and evaluation activities. Buff’s position will continue until 9/30/06, when project funding will terminate.

Buff reported on the success of the Homeschooler events. At the Puyallup convention, more than 400 people stopped at the exhibit and 50+ attended the class presented by ‘ambassador’ Catherine Lord. While the Spokane exhibition was less well-attended, those who visited the booth were enthusiastic and extremely interested.

Members briefly discussed WELL, the Washington Electronic Library, and were encouraged to share information about it with colleagues. This portal would provide a variety of online resources, including virtual reference and Wally, and is aimed at services to all people in the state. (The savings for statewide database licensing would be enormous.) After the fall election, there will be a clearer idea about how to pursue the promotion of the concept, which would have significant benefits for all sectors of the Washington library community.

The Virtual Evaluation Toolkit (VET) was reviewed and minor revisions recommended. The evaluators were commended for the excellent reports on the test site evaluations, although it was noted that the time estimated to complete the task was woefully underestimated (and the evaluators underpaid as a consequence). The document will be converted to .pdf and posted to the VRS training Web site as soon as possible. After comments from distant reviewers are considered and incorporated, the document will be posted to the project Web pages on the state library site. The proposal to present a program on VET at the VRD conference was accepted; in addition to an overview by Buff, Nancy Foley will talk about the VET process from the

evaluator perspective and Barb Pitney will offer information about the evaluated library experience. The post-evaluation questionnaire will be sent to test site libraries in late October.

Seattle Public Library has proposed that the project host a “VRS Summit” for all Washington VR libraries, perhaps extending an invitation to others in the NW (BC, Montana, Idaho, Oregon, etc.). SPL also offered to host the event. The group discussed the proposal at length and with great enthusiasm. Buff noted that the project’s funding and purpose focus on Washington libraries, but that regional cooperation is a natural extension of that vision. The day should incorporate past (review startup of project and grants), present (status of current services) and future (determining the direction we will take). Specific suggestions included:

- Offering separate tracks in the morning—QP/24-7, general VR, WA focus, region focus, etc. [Note: this certainly would depend upon facilities available.]
- Topics—functionality issues, sustainability, technology, future software developments
- Videotaping the event and providing a written report
- Context: an agenda for the future

The week of February 7-11, 2005 was selected as an optimum time. This would provide enough remaining time in the project to act on recommendations and results, as well as sufficient time to organize the event. Buff will contact SPL to make arrangements.

The Marketing Initiative meeting on August 17 provided some excellent research results, some of which are germane to VRS. Buff will share an electronic copy of survey data.

Training contracts for next year have been forwarded to the contract manager at OSOS. The first class will be scheduled in eastern WA in October, with Lorena O’English and Buff pairing. The number of trainers and classes will be reduced this year, and Anne Bingham/Nancy Foley will also have evaluator duties added to their contracts in the hope that we can assess three more libraries. The timeline for evaluations will be longer, and will concentrate on a single library for each instance.

Nancy Huling and Buff will be presenting an introductory “Going Virtual” workshop to the COBIMET (4 academic libraries) consortium in San Juan, Puerto Rico on 9/15/04.

Dates for Steering Committee meetings were set for the next project year (Jean Holcomb will reserve the Regional Justice Center conference room), all during the 9:00 a.m.-noon slot:

October 28, 2004

January 6, 2005

April 28, 2005

August 25, 2005

Reserve the dates now! (During the final project year, three meetings will be scheduled.)